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THE ANGLO-EGYPTIAN AGREEMENT

Some Causes and Implications

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SOON AFTER THE Anglo-Egyptian agreement of October 1954 was signed, Mr. Anthony Nutting, answering on behalf of the British Government a question from a Member of Parliament who feared the effect of the agreement upon Israel, assured his anxious questioner that in his view it could not "in any way disturb or alter unfavourably for Israel the balance of power in the Middle East." [1] No doubt it was necessary for him to give such an answer, but it is clear that the agreement did in fact mark the greatest change that had occurred in the Middle Eastern balance of power since 1923, and that not only so far as the relations of Arabs and Jews were concerned. It is also clear, however, that the agreement only in part initiated a process of change, while in part it acknowledged a process which had taken place. The purpose of this article is to describe the process which is past no less than to sketch the outlines of that which is beginning.

This article will start from the assumption that Egyptians, like Ameri-

[1] Parliamentary Debates: House of Commons, October 25, 1954.

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cans and Englishmen, are human beings. When faced with something we do not like or do not understand in the attitude of a nation other than our own, it is easy to "explain" it in terms of abnormal psychology. The national movements of Asia and Africa are often explained by reference to the quirks of the "Oriental mind," or blamed upon the domination of violent and irrational hatred, and an unwillingness to listen to the voice of reason which (we assume) would tell the Orientals, if allowed to, that their interests are really the same as ours. Such explanations are harmful at every level. They deny the essential sameness of human nature; they obscure the basic principle of politics in a world of sovereign states, that national interests may overlap but are never identical; and they may even tempt us into the self-righteousness of believing that how other people react to us is not really a consequence of how we have acted to them. It is less dangerous and more profitable to start with the assumption that Egyptians are as reasonable as Englishmen. But reasonableness in politics takes the form of intelligent pursuit of national interests, and the way in which a nation pursues its interests will depend upon the means at its disposal. Thus an attempt will be made to show that the Anglo-Egyptian conflict can be explained in terms of two main factors: a difference in interest between the two parties, and a disparity in power.

But an explanation given in these terms can easily be misunderstood. In saying (as it will be necessary to say) that Britain had superior power in Egypt, that she used it to further her interests, and that her use of it had certain consequences both for herself and for Egypt, one might easily seem to be saying that it was wrong for her to have power, or to use it as she did. But to pass moral judgments is not the purpose of the article. That nation-states exist, that some of them are stronger than others, and that those which have power must use it in pursuit of their own essential interests (particularly that of survival) are elementary facts of human society as it has existed until now. It may be the task of the philosopher to discover the criterion by which what happens in human society should be judged, but it is not that of the historian; yet it *is* his clear duty to trace the consequences of the acts of his own government no less than others, even if in so doing he may seem to place those acts in an unfavorable light.[2]

II

To show why the agreement was necessary, it will be best to survey briefly, and place in their historical setting, the essential elements in the Anglo-Egyptian conflict. The conflict goes back to the beginning of the

[2] See Brigadier S. H. Longrigg's interpretation (*International Affairs,* July 1953) of my articles on *The Decline of the West in the Middle East* (*International Affairs,* January and April, 1953).

British occupation in 1882, and the most important fact about the occupation is that it was imposed by acts of force: the bombardment of Alexandria, the landing of an armed expedition, and the defeat of the Egyptian army at Tel el-Kebir. At least until 1936, the British position in Egypt had no basis except that of power, and this fact moulded the attitude both of those who possessed the power and of those against whom it had been used. The Egyptians could never forget that they lay at someone else's mercy, and from this sprang a deep, at first almost unspoken, but unswerving and implacable resentment which impotence could mask but not destroy. Among the British, the consciousness of power could be almost absent when it was not challenged, but it would emerge at moments of crisis and justify itself by the mystical doctrine that "Egyptians only understand force." Hence came that tone which has marked British communications with Egypt in the last 70 years, and which can be heard as much in Sir Winston Churchill's speeches of 1952–54 as in Granville's despatches two generations earlier: a tone of insistence, almost of command, with a clear hint behind it that if Egypt did not do what Britain wanted she could easily be compelled.[3]

Moreover, the occupation was imposed on the ruins of a popular movement and to restore the tyranny of an alien and unloved dynasty. Cromer and the writers who followed him made much of the chaos into which the national rising of 'Arabi was leading Egypt, and of Britain's duty to intervene to prevent that chaos. It may be doubted whether 'Arabi would in fact have led Egypt to ruin; not all observers of the events of 1882 give that impression. Even if it was as Cromer said, it would still be natural that to the Egyptian mind 'Arabi should be a heroic symbol of freedom (and it was profoundly significant that one of the early acts of the present military regime was to restore to the family of 'Arabi the property confiscated after the collapse of his movement). Similarly, Cromer and other writers have stressed the obligation of Britain to restore the authority of the Khedive; and a whole school of historians, subsidized by the munificence of King Fu'ad, has recounted the benefits conferred upon Egypt by the family of Muhammad 'Ali. But beneath the surface of flattery and obedience, there was always in the Egyptian people a profound dislike for the alien dynasty which had created modern Egypt, it is true, but had created it for their own glory, had used its manpower in the wars of Muhammad 'Ali, and seized its wealth generation after generation. This dislike found expression in the famous article in which Muhammad 'Abduh, the greatest thinker of modern Egypt and himself the son of villagers, marked the centenary of the dynasty by describing what the reign of Mu-

[3] Granville to Cromer, January 4, 1884: "It is indispensable that Her Majesty's Government should, as long as the provisional occupation of the country by British troops continues, be assured that the advice which they may feel it their duty to tender . . . should be followed."

hammad 'Ali had really meant for the Egyptian peasant.[4] There was a moment, it is true, when the young Faruq seemed likely to become the symbol of the new Egyptian nation, but it was only a passing moment and the promise was unfulfilled.

The restoration of the Khedive's power, if not in great matters of state at least in those small matters of internal policy which affected every-day life, gave to the nascent self-confidence of the Egyptian people, stumbling out of the tyranny of a thousand years only to be pushed back again, a shock from which it is only now recovering; and it checked and distorted the natural development of the Egyptian community. In a normal community, the interplay of social forces expresses itself in the struggle for political power, and social change leads to the transfer of political control. Had Egypt been in a position which allowed her to enjoy an unchecked internal development, the power of the Khedive might have been checked if not destroyed, and new elements in Egyptian society might have come gradually and peacefully to control the government. Prevented from this consummation, the struggle for power took the form of an endless, sometimes unreal, sometimes clandestine battle for influence between Palace and nationalists, the two poles around which gravitated all the forces of Egyptian society. This struggle gave to Egyptian nationalism a barren, negative and unreal quality; instead of a movement to change Egyptian society, it became an expression of impotence, one more of those movements by which the Egyptian peasant, in joining the crowd and losing his voice in theirs, acquires if not power at least the sensation of power, and defies his weakness even if he cannot break free from it.

It may be doubted whether in the end Britain gained as much as she lost by her association with the Khedive's cause. Having come to Egypt for the ostensible reason of restoring his authority, she could not wholly free herself from him. When after 1900 there began to arise new forces in Egyptian life, she was not free to establish with them a relationship which might have formed a firm basis for her interests. In the end her presence came to rest on the very division between Palace and nationalists which it had helped to create. Thus imperceptibly the dependence of the Palace on the British turned into a dependence of the British on the Palace. Should she quarrel with the King or weaken his position, indirectly she would undermine her own. When in February 1942 the British Government moved tanks against the Palace to compel King Faruq to put Nahas in power, Faruq, whose occasional disillusioned insight into political realities not even his enemies doubted, is said to have told the British Ambassador that in the end it would be Britain and not he who would most regret the step.

[4] *al-Manar,* June 7, 1902. Reproduced in Rashid Rida, *Life of Muhammad 'Abduh,* vol. 2, pp. 382–89.

III

In the luminous last pages of his *Modern Egypt,* Cromer put in the clearest terms the problem posed for Britain by the nature of the occupation:

> In default of community of race, religion, language and habits of thought, which ordinarily constitute the main bonds of union between the rulers and the ruled, we must endeavour to forge such artificial bonds between the Englishman and the Egyptian as the circumstances of the case render available. One of the most important of these bonds must always be the exhibition of reasonable and disciplined sympathy for the Egyptians. . . . Another bond may, to some extent, be forged by appealing to the person or the pocket. . . . Do not let us however imagine that, under any circumstances, we can ever create a feeling of loyalty in the breasts of the Egyptians akin to that felt by a self-governing people for indigenous rulers if, besides being indigenous, they are also beneficent. Neither by the display of good sympathy, nor by good government, can we forge bonds which will be other than brittle.[5]

In other words, while the fundamental resentment caused by the British presence could not be removed, it could at least be neutralized by making that presence a source of positive and tangible advantage, to Egyptians as individuals and to as large a part as possible of the Egyptian community. Cromer's own policy was directed to that end. The reforms carried out in his time, and immediately afterwards, are too well known to need more than a passing mention. The finances of the Egyptian government were reduced to order, and within ten years of the start of the occupation Egypt was able to begin paying back the debts incurred by Isma'il. The irrigation works projected and begun by Muhammad 'Ali and Isma'il were carried further; the crop area was thus increased from 4.5 million feddans in 1881 to 7.5 in 1911, and the yield of cotton from 3 million cantars in 1879 to almost 8 million in 1913. The honesty and efficiency of administration and justice were carried to a point not achieved before and largely lost since. It is true, as Egyptian writers have pointed out, that the benefit of the reforms went first of all to the foreign creditors; that the increase of cultivation, together with the improvement of law and order, strengthened and extended the power of the landowners; and that Cromer and his successors neglected the basis of all real national progress, the schools. Nevertheless, some counterbalance to the national resentment was in fact created. With the exception of the old Turkish ruling group, every section of the population — landowners, foreign bourgeoisie, Levantine professional class, peasants, minorities — gained something from the British presence; and there emerged a group of influential Egyptians, led by Muhammad 'Abduh and finally organizing themselves in the Umma party (founded in 1907), who, while not deviating from their final aim of independence, were prepared to acquiesce in the presence of the occupying power so long as its policy seemed likely to lead them nearer to their goal.

[5] The Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (2 vols., New York, 1916), vol. 2, pp. 569–70.

IV

This balance between the sense of resentment and the consciousness of benefit was always precarious, but it was most stable perhaps in the decade immediately before World War I, and that in spite of the incident of Denshawai. By 1918 it had disappeared in the smoke of the national revolution, and from then until 1954 the resentment of foreign power increased yearly, while the sense of benefit to be derived from the foreign presence diminished and then disappeared. Why was this so? The answer is to be found in a change in the attitude of both parties to the relationship. Egyptian national sentiment grew as the educated middle class grew, and as the Egyptian mind recovered from the shock of 1882; and this sentiment was suddenly ripened by the war, which inflamed the spirits of men and increased the practical disadvantages of the British presence at the same time as it decreased the advantages. On the other side, while the war showed fully the immense positive advantage derived by Britain from her occupation of Egypt, it also made more difficult the continuance of an unrestricted occupation: materially because of the diminished strength of Britain after the exhaustion of war, and morally because of the new political ideas to which the war had given influence.

From these changes sprang a new policy in Egypt, as elsewhere in the Middle East: that of replacing direct by remote control. In 1922 Egypt was declared independent, but on terms which preserved for Great Britain the reality of final control over her policy: Britain reserved to herself all matters dealing with the security of Imperial communications, defense against foreign aggression, the position of foreign interests and minorities, and the Sudan, pending the conclusion of a satisfactory agreement in regard to them. In 1936 the agreement foreseen in this declaration was made, after several attempts had failed. Once more the scope of Egyptian self-rule was widened, and the occupation was officially ended. But a British force remained on Egyptian soil, and Egypt bound herself to do nothing inconsistent with the British alliance; thus ultimate control of Egypt's national policy remained where it had been, in British hands.

Britain still had power, but she had given up responsibility for what happened inside Egypt. This new position meant a shift in the emphasis of her policy, from her duties toward Egypt to her rights in Egypt. The new attitude is clearly expressed in Lord Lloyd's book:

> When I undertook the office of High Commissioner it was with the determination . . . to leave no doubt in any minds that whilst the measure of independence granted under the Declaration must be real, the reservations and Egypt's respect for them must be equally real and our intention to see them respected made evident.[6]

[6] Lord Lloyd, *Egypt since Cromer* (2 vols., London, 1933–34), vol. 2, p. 143.

Moreover, it would have needed superhuman strength to have power and not to use it, or threaten to use it, in defence of Britain's position; and since whatever went on in Egypt did potentially affect that position, British power still remained an important factor not only in Anglo-Egyptian relations but in the internal politics of Egypt. To quote Lord Lloyd again:

> It would have been the merest humbug to act as if the British Army of occupation did not exist. The existence of that army unquestionably gave us a potential domination in Egypt, and the existence of that potentiality laid upon us an inescapable responsibility. It was useless to argue that we had no intention of using our resources of power. No Egyptian could so far disbelieve the evidence of his senses as to accept such a statement for a moment. . . . However tempting such a course might be in theory, in practice it was quite impossible — Egypt herself at this stage would not allow us — to retire to our tents and take no part in her political struggles.[7]

In the twenty years which followed the declaration of Egypt's independence some measure of force was used, or clearly threatened, on at least five occasions: in 1924, 1926, 1927, 1928, and 1942. On uncounted other occasions the consciousness of the possibility of its use must have affected the dealings of the two governments.

While British power was thus used to defend British rights, British influence was not used to the full in order to maintain that counterbalance of advantages which Cromer had clearly seen to be necessary. The declaration of 1922, and still more the Treaty of 1936, did, it is true, limit the possibilities of British action in Egypt, but they did not destroy them. The British Ambassador retained a vast influence in the internal affairs of Egypt: because of the accumulated prestige of his government, because of the British officials who remained in Egyptian government service until 1936, and because of the presence of the British army. But this influence did not lead, as had the influence of Cromer, to large reforms — changes in land tenure, the development of industry — such as the growth of the Egyptian population was making increasingly urgent. No doubt this was inevitable in the circumstances of the time, given the lack of interest of Egyptians themselves in the social question, the impoverishment of Britain, and the negative political spirit of those strange years between the wars. But inevitable or not, it had certain effects. The Egyptian sense of lying at the mercy of British power still existed, for that power was still there, but it was no longer balanced by the sense of benefits derived from the British presence. Apart from the foreign trading communities, no considerable section of the Egyptian population was conscious of any tangible advantage to be derived from the continuance of the occupation.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

V

Inside Egypt, the years which followed 1922 were years of rapid change. The declaration of independence, by making possible the creation of constitutional government, embittered the struggle between Palace and nation, and brought it into the open. King and Wafd found themselves locked in a conflict which, abated at moments, was never really ended until both were superseded by the coming to power of the army in 1952. It was indeed a conflict which could not be resolved, because behind the two parties there stood a third which every now and then intervened when either became too powerful. What made it more bitter and more barren was the personalities of those involved in it. King Fu'ad and King Faruq, in addition to some virtues that the world did not perhaps know, possessed also the weaknesses of their dynasty — love of money and the determination to rule despotically; and it was the misfortune of both Britain and Egypt that the two leaders of the Wafd possessed the tortuous obstinacy, the easily kindled vanity, and the ultimate weakness of the Egyptian peasant.

Moreover, this was a period when the social life of Egypt was altering fast. The population was rapidly increasing, and by the middle 1920's had certainly passed the optimum figure. The standard of living in the countryside was no longer rising, as it had risen throughout the previous half-century. The surplus population was being pushed into the towns, where poverty and neglect generated a mass of bitter feeling seeking an outlet. The accumulation of capital by landowners, together with the growth of the town population, provided the conditions for the development of an Egyptian industry: Bank Misr, founded in 1920, had become by 1939 the center of a whole network of industries, some of them at a reasonable level of efficiency. The system of official schools had expanded greatly, at primary and secondary levels, and the University of Cairo was forming a new professional elite. From these processes there emerged new social classes, whose interests and feelings led them into the ranks of national opposition to Great Britain. The new middle class connected with industry wished for political power in order to use the machinery of government to help the growth of young industries, and looked upon Britain as a rival, whose goods filled the Egyptian market and whose government used its influence in the interests of its own middle class. The peasantry was growing articulate and even powerful: since there was no stable class structure, and political changes had prevented the long maintenance of inherited wealth, it was possible for those of peasant origin to rise quickly to wealth and authority, while the system of education was producing a new intelligentsia near enough to their roots in the peasant life to express its aspirations. Most of the important figures in political life after the generation of 'Adli and Sarwat, the creators of the new Egyptian industry, many of the im-

portant figures in literature, came of village stock; and they brought to their relations with Britain that instinctive horror of the foreign ruler which the fellah has learned from history.

VI

In the years after 1945, these developments led to the emergence of new forces which could no longer be grouped around the two rallying points of the Palace and the Wafd. The existence of a mass of feeling, unharnessed by any of the existing political groups and growing in volume and bitterness as the destitute town population increased, was one cause of the instability of political life in Egypt between 1945 and 1952. The Communists and the Muslim Brothers, both in their different ways (which perhaps were not so different as they seemed), tried to absorb this feeling, until part of it, although by no means all, was canalized for a time by the new military regime.

The external position of Egypt also changed in the years after the war. The emergence of small new independent states in the Middle East and the ebbing of British and French control in Asia and Africa were creating a "hinterland" waiting to be dominated and unified by somebody. Her geographical position, no less than her central position in the Muslim and Arab worlds, seemed to offer Egypt the chance of becoming leader of the northern half of Africa as far as Arabic was spoken and Islam professed, of divided Arab Asia, and perhaps of countries beyond. Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir has well described this opportunity lying before Egypt:

> We cannot look at the map of the world . . . without realising Egypt's position on the map and her role by the logic of that position. Can we fail to see that there is an Arab zone surrounding us? . . . Can we possibly ignore the fact that there is an African continent which we have been made part of by fate? . . . Can we ignore the fact that there is an Islamic world with which we are united by bonds of religious principle reinforced by historical realities? . . . It always strikes me that in this area in which we live is a role running around aimlessly looking for a hero to give it being. . . . The role is not one of leadership or domination. It is rather a role of interaction with and response to all the factors mentioned above, which involves making use of the tremendous latent strength in the regions surrounding us to create a great power in this area which will then rise up to a level of dignity and undertake a positive part in building the future of mankind."[8]

To play this role, Egypt must be free to make her own decisions in major matters, and such freedom she could not have so long as the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty laid down the major lines of her policy, and so long as a British force lay within easy striking distance of her capital.

What was more important still, there was no longer the same harmony of fundamental interest between Britain and Egypt as there had been

[8] Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir, *The Philosophy of the Egyptian Revolution*, translated by R. H. Nolte (American Universities Field Staff), p. 30.

when the Treaty was signed. In 1936 Britain was still actually, though no longer potentially, the most powerful state in the world: the center of trade, the possessor of final predominance of power. In making an agreement with her, Egypt was protecting herself from a new occupation, and perhaps a worse; and in consenting to the link between the Egyptian currency and sterling, and agreeing to draw her foreign officials and technicians from Britain by preference, she was not restricting her freedom so much as recognizing a state of fact which existed, and doing what her own interest might in any event have led her to do. In 1936, to have a close and special relationship with Great Britain was a way of entering the modern world; but by 1946 this special relationship was preventing Egypt from becoming a full member of the new world. In the new world it was the United States and not Britain which was the dominant power, and if it was necessary to have a special relation with any Great Power it was only from the United States that it would be possible to derive those advantages in the way of capital, technical assistance and military aid which Britain had been able to give before World War II. In the new world, too, power was distributed in a new way. Instead of a group of European Powers monopolizing effective power and controlling as they pleased the subject or half-subject peoples of Asia and Africa, there existed now, in the shifting hinterland between the two Great Powers, a whole series of centers of relatively independent power, in Asia and Africa no less than Europe; and those who controlled them could aspire to exercise a certain independent influence, not only to further their own interests, but also to play a part of some importance in the World's Debate. In 1936 an Egypt free from the British connection would have been weaker and more exposed to danger and less considered by the world than she was; by 1946, only an Egypt free from the British connection could actualize the potentialities of her position. Nor did there exist in Egypt that factor which kept India and Ceylon within the British orbit even after the withdrawal of British forces: the deep assimilation of English culture and the social and political values inherent in it. It was now that the full effect of Cromer's neglect of education was felt. Of the intelligentsia, the doctors, engineers, and scientists were mainly of English training; but the lawyers, writers, and journalists were largely of French formation; and the half-educated, although they usually knew more of English than of any other foreign language, had not been deeply touched by any European culture.

All this made Egypt the more eager to free herself from British control. At the same time Britain could not think of withdrawal with an easy mind. The issues at stake were enormous: the British army in Egypt, after all, was the basis of the whole British position in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Moreover, there was the principle of inertia, the reluctance of a Great Power to move from an attained position of strength

until it is proved that the disadvantages of staying are greater than those of moving. There was another factor at work only less important than either of these. In 1936, Britain could relax her direct hold on Egypt, confident that the whole tendency of Egypt's financial and commercial and cultural life would still bind her to Britain; but by 1946, to relax her hold would mean that those same tendencies, if allowed to work freely, would draw Egypt away from Britain. As a member of the Western community, Britain would still gain if withdrawal made it possible for Egypt to establish closer links with the Western world; but within that community, withdrawal would mean a comparative loss of influence to Britain.

No doubt, too, there were mistakes and misunderstandings on both sides. In Britain, for example, it was not always understood that to have power and not to use it is very different from not having power: it was often thought, therefore, that since Britain did not intend to use her forces in Egypt in order to interfere in Egypt's domestic affairs, the Egyptians were unreasonable in objecting to their presence. Again, the fact that Britain had no desire to dominate Egypt sometimes obscured the fact that she did wish to retain a position from which she would inevitably dominate Egypt. Nevertheless, in spite of all natural and legitimate hesitations, and in spite, too, of misunderstandings, the forces in favor of agreement were stronger than those working against it. In the course of the long period of tension which began with the Egyptian denunciation of the Treaty of 1936, it became clear that Britain had no alternative to withdrawal from Egypt except virtually to reoccupy the whole country; and this was clearly impossible, both because of her diminished strength and because of the change in the political atmosphere of the world. Moreover, the British withdrawal from India was gradually unfolding its implications: not only did it change the British position in the Middle East (although not destroying its importance), but it helped to produce in Britain a new conception of the role she could play in the world.

VII

It is too early to see all the implications of the Agreement, but not too early to see that they will be immense, and to pose the problem of the form which they will take. At the heart of this problem lies the riddle of Egypt. So different in their way of thinking, their social organization and their humor from other peoples, even those who share their language and their religion — so tactless and heavy-handed in pursuit of their interests or their rights — the Egyptian people may often seem to be a cause of weakness if not a cause of trouble in the Middle East. Yet perhaps we do them an injustice. We should not belittle them because their century of "Westernization" has produced less spectacular results than in Turkey. No Kemal

has transformed in a decade, and amidst the admiration of the world, the whole structure of society. Yet the progress has been there, in every sphere of life: the gradual modernization of the material equipment of society; the development, with British help, of the most elaborate and efficient system of irrigation in the world; the growth of modern industry; the emancipation of women; the elaboration of modern Arabic as a medium of communication, and the use of it in newspapers and by writers who are read all over the Arabic-speaking world; the creation of the largest and most splendid city in Africa; a certain flowering of the arts — the films, the paintings of Mahmud Sa'id, the sculptures of Mukhtar; all this while at the same time the great cosmopolitan cities were serving as hosts to foreign cultures, which flowered there to produce the poetry of Cavafy and an exotic blossom of French literature. If the progress has not been faster, it is perhaps because Egypt has not been willing to buy modernity at the price Turkey has paid: the rejection of the beliefs and values of the past. It is indeed the importance of modern Egypt for the world that here and here almost alone in the modern world the problem of Islam has been posed seriously, by Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, and faced responsibly, not only by him and his disciples but by whole sections of the intelligentsia. Can Islam, while preserving its essence, yet serve as the moral basis for a modern community? That is the question which underlies all movements of thought, and even political movements, in Egypt today. The struggle with this problem, while it may slow the speed of advance, may also guarantee its stability.

VIII

It is true, the movement of thought about Islam started by Muhammad 'Abduh has grown thin and weak in the last few years: and perhaps this is one of the reasons why Egyptian literature, which seemed so promising two decades ago, has not since then fulfilled its promise. But these last years have not been wholly barren, for they have seen a sudden upsurge of social thought and social conscience, forced on the Egyptian mind by the growth of population and the deepening of popular misery, and articulated by a group of economists and sociologists trained in England and America. Already in the last Wafdist government the first effects of their work could be seen, in the reforms carried out by the Minister of Social Affairs, Ahmad Husayn, and the Minister of Education, Taha Husayn; but the men of the present Government have carried the process a stage further. Naive and of limited experience when they came to power, their social ideas consisted of little more than a vague idealism and a resolution, rooted in their peasant origin, to end the power of the landowners and give the land to the people. But they had the intelligence to seek advice from the best available economists and social thinkers, and to learn something from the outside world: at

one point they were reported to be studying the program of the British Labour Party. The two-year conflict with Britain delayed the carrying out of their plans, both because it diverted attention from internal affairs, and because of the refusal of the United States to give money to Egypt so long as she had not reached agreement with Britain. The instability caused by this long conflict shook the alliance of officers and social reformers; as the tension in the country made necessary a firmer and more direct control of the officers over the whole machine of government some of the best of their civilian advisers fell away. Nevertheless, now that dollars have begun to flow, it may be expected that some at least of the great projects will reach fruition: the High Dam at Aswan, the iron and steel works, improvements in the social conditions of the villages.

These measures, if they are carried out, will only confirm a change which has already begun, and of which the coming to office of the present regime was only a sign. Political power in Egypt has passed from the great landowners to three other classes, all of them new, all in process of strengthening themselves, which the present regime seemed for a moment to have succeeded in holding together in precarious combination: the industrial middle class, the professional class which has mastered Western techniques, and the larger peasants, who, rather than the ordinary cultivators, seem to have benefited most from the first phase of land reform. These groups all desire some sort of social and economic reform, both in order to absorb the surplus population and so prevent the growth of Communism, and to increase the national strength. But although they may agree on some immediate national questions, there is a deep division within them on the final questions of values.

Speaking very roughly, it may be said that five sets of ideas about the organization of society are in conflict for possession of the Egyptian mind. The old secular nationalism, which inspired the original Wafd as it inspired Atatürk, is weaker than it was, and the new secular social democracy of Western Europe seems scarcely to be born. But something of both these ideas has been absorbed by Islamic "modernism" which, while holding fast to the essentials of the Muslim faith (however they may be defined), would be willing to reshape public law, social behavior, and the customs of the community in the light of modern needs and of Western thought; and which, while clinging to the sense of Islamic solidarity which still makes a single world out of Muslim nations, also wishes Egypt to be part of that greater "world" called into existence by the West. Over against it stand all those movements which call for rejection of the values no less than the political influence of the West, and long for a world made new, either by a return to primitive Islam (as they conceive it) or by the adoption of the principles of Marx. The Muslim Brothers and the Communists, for all their difference of formal ideologies, could easily be brought together by

their hatred of a common enemy and their image of a world made new by revolution; and the Brothers might well form the ladder by which the Communists came to power.

It is possible to see the forces aligned on either side. On the one side are the deep resentment of the British presence, so recently ended, and of Western policy in Palestine; the vast and growing misery of the masses in town and countryside, which perhaps not even the biggest measures of the government will be able to reverse; the existence of an "internal proletariat" of small peasants, factory workers and petty officials, shut out from political power under this regime as under the old, and becoming articulate through the spread of schools; and perhaps something in popular Islam, that longing for a reign of virtue, and that conviction that virtue lies in strict observance of the sacred law, which have given strength to movements of revolt throughout Islamic history, and may still be used by movements whose real inspiration comes from other sources than the Qur'an.

On the other side there is the influence of the Western Powers, not really lessened by the British withdrawal but on the contrary growing greater as the irreversible tendency of social and economic life makes Egypt, on that level at least, ever more a part of the Western community; there is the solidity and strength of the Egyptian middle class, now firmly in control of the machine of government and deeply committed to living in a state whose law and social customs and economic organization are derived not from the Shari'ah but from Western concepts of utility and social welfare; and there is the strength of the liberal tradition in Egypt. After all, for two or three generations, to become part of liberal Europe was the guiding idea of renascent Egypt. This idea inspired equally Isma'il in the 1860's and Taha Husayn when, sixty years later, he gave in his *Future of Culture in Egypt* the classical formulation of the doctrine that Egypt was and ought to be part of Europe; it was accepted not only by purely secular writers but to some extent by the father of "Islamic modernism," Muhammad 'Abduh, and by those who, like Lutfi Sayyid, preserved the central tradition of his thought; and it has gone deeper perhaps into the Egyptian mind than we suspect.

In this conflict of ideas where does the present Government stand? Its leading members are drawn in the main from the lower middle class, and are on the whole conservative in social matters; but they seem to have been touched by the ideal of a liberal Islam. Their policy in regard to minorities, for example, derives more from modern liberal ideas than from those of medieval Islam; and it is significant that after the retirement of Nagib the Presidency of the Republic was offered to Lutfi Sayyid, the last survivor of the close associates of Muhammad 'Abduh. But hard necessity, or youthful impatience, seems to have prevailed over liberal ideas in the most important sphere of all, that of liberty. The regime has carried further that degradation of the once great press of Cairo which has been going on for

ten years, and which must sadden all those who remember what it once was; and after three years of military rule constitutional life is still in abeyance. It is this denial of civil and political liberty which is one of the main causes for the present opposition of the intelligentsia to the regime; such opposition is a weakness for the regime, but is perhaps a sign of the real strength of Egypt.

IX

Throughout the long tension which preceded the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement there was never any doubt that, on the great issue of world Communism, the Egyptian Government inclined toward the West, nor that in so doing it reflected the feelings of the new dominant groups in Egyptian society. But it was clear also, and has become increasingly so since the Agreement was signed, that the fear of Communism is not the only nor even the most important issue in Egyptian politics. Egypt has no common frontier with the Soviet Union, as has Turkey, nor has her history conditioned her to think of her greatest danger as coming from that direction. Whether the potentialities of cooperation with the West will ever be realized is therefore an open question, and all we can do is to indicate those factors which will determine the answer to it.

First, it is not at all clear whether the present government, or another one representing the same forces, will be able to maintain its grip on the country. The masses of the Egyptian people, and in particular the "internal proletariat" of cultivators and workers, clearly do not, and have no reason to, share the pro-Western tendencies of the new ruling groups. The memory of the struggle with Britain, the consciousness of their present misery, and the strength of the idea of a self-sufficient Islamic world, combine to make them neutralist in the great struggle, but neutralist with an anti-Western color. As the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement is carried out, and if the economic and social measures of the government take effect, neutralism may weaken, or at least may lose its anti-Western color, and become no more than the expression of the normal human desire not to be involved in war.

Now that Egypt has relatively complete freedom of action, her immediate preoccupation in foreign affairs is not the cold war, but that "role in search of a hero" of which 'Abd al-Nasir wrote. The idea of a hinterland waiting to be united and made once more into a power in world affairs explains all the major moves in Egyptian foreign policy in the last few years. It was to be free to create this power that Egypt wished to be rid of the occupation; and it is only as leader of a united hinterland, and thus as wielder of a certain power, that she would wish to establish a political link with the Western world. Whether she will succeed is now the urgent question of the day. Her geographical position at the hinge of Asia and Africa, her central position in the Muslim community, her relative size and wealth, are all advantages. In the Arab world, her position as the center

of Arab culture, the artificial and divided nature of the other Arab states, and the fear that if they do not follow her lead she will make a separate peace with Israel, have so far secured her predominance. But on the other hand, there are certain factors working in the other direction: a certain obtuseness often shown by Egyptians in dealing with other peoples, and the differing degrees of emphasis placed on the Communist danger and the need to prepare against it by those Middle Eastern states which have a frontier exposed to Communist attack and those which do not. The tension between these two sets of factors has come into the open with the signing of the Turko-Iraqi Treaty; but while it could be unwise to minimize the genuine differences in conceptions of Middle Eastern policy, as well as the local and personal rivalries, which underlie the disagreement between Iraq and Egypt, it would be equally unwise to assume that Arab solidarity is not strong enough to withstand even a disagreement as deep as this, or to give too simple an explanation of Egypt's attitude. Her present violent refusal to join a Middle Eastern pact may be no more than the beginning of a process of bargaining with a view to securing the highest possible price for her adherence to a pact.

X

We must linger on this notion of a "price," for it points to a truth which is often overlooked. So long as the division of the world into sovereign states exists, there can be no unlimited harmony between the interests of states; there can be at most a limited coincidence of national interests, leading to limited agreements of a greater or smaller degree of stability. Egypt and the West may have the major common interest of fighting and preventing the triumph of Communism, and this interest may some day lead them into political agreement, but that does not mean that in other spheres their interests do not conflict, and sometimes the conflict may be so serious as to upset the agreement. It is not surprising, therefore, that both sides, before entering into an agreement about the one thing in regard to which their interests are in accord, should also try to get their own way, partially at least, in the other matters on which their interests are not in accord. Nor should we expect that, once agreement has been reached, the parties to it would not still try to impose their will in matters which it does not cover; and although the struggle of interests, as taking place within an alliance, may lose a dimension of bitterness which it would otherwise have, it will nevertheless be real, and in some circumstances may even threaten the alliance.

There are indeed various points of Middle Eastern policy at which the interests of America, Britain, and the other Western states may conflict with those of Egypt and other Middle Eastern states. To say this is not to criticize either Western or Arab policy. A wise government tries so far

as it can to strike a balance between its own interests and those of others, but it can never wholly succeed, and when the point of conflict comes, of course it must prefer its own interests to theirs. It would be equally foolish for an Arab to demand that Britain and the United States should prefer his interests to their own, and for an American or Englishman to think of an Arab who opposes Western policy as being "disloyal" (which implies that he has no interests of his own) or "unreasonable" (which implies that his interests must necessarily be the same as those of the West).

Thus, to take examples, while Sudanese opinion seems to be hardening against close union with Egypt, and British opinion is likely to support the Sudanese in this, it cannot be expected that Egypt will ever stop trying to establish as close a control as she can over the upper valley of the Nile, the key to her security. Again, both Britain and the United States, moved partly by the desire to eliminate a cause of instability and partly by the sense of guilt (which leads them to wish to be able to forget the tragic process they themselves began), would like the Arab states to accept the existence of Israel and make peace with it; but neither Egypt nor any other Arab state is likely to accept what has happened as being the end of the process, and their interests as well as their feelings would lead them to try to perpetuate the present ambiguous situation halfway between peace and war. Yet again, although Britain and the United States no doubt support the French decision to give a limited autonomy to Tunisia, they cannot be expected to push France, an unstable ally at best, into giving full independence to the three North African countries, and so taking a step which might weaken her whole position and for which her public is not ready; but on the other hand the newly independent states of the Middle East cannot be indifferent to the struggle of the North African Arabs for national freedom.

Such differences of interest and policy will always trouble an agreement between the Arabs and the West, but they need not destroy it. Final power over the political fate of the Middle East lies, as for so long, not inside the area but outside it. Once it was in the hands of Great Britain, but now the British withdrawal from Egypt is speeding the process by which it is being transferred to the United States (although the transfer is not complete, and the British position in certain countries, notably Iraq, is so strong that Britain will still have an important, and may at times have a dominant, voice in the formation of Western policy). In such a situation, no government or party can define its policy until the possessor of final power has defined his; and how the weaker will react toward the stronger will depend on how the stronger has acted toward him. If the history of the British policy in Egypt proves anything, it is that the most dangerous of positions is to have power and not to use it; and the only safe use of power is to create (so far as can be done) a balance of interests between those who possess it and those who lie beneath its shadow.